IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A method for laser machining a coated sheet ~~sheets~~, comprising:

generating ~~in which,~~ on at least one ~~side of at least one~~ surface of the coated sheet [[,]] at least one topographical change protruding from the surface ~~is generated~~ by ~~means of a laser~~ directing a laser beam onto the sheet ~~surface by means of a scanner device, wherein~~ and guiding the laser beam ~~is guided~~ to describe ~~about the center of its machining area~~ a narrowing spiral, whereby the laser beam generates the at least one topographical change protruding from:

- ~~on~~ the laser beam facing surface ~~side~~ of the sheet, or
- ~~on~~ the surface ~~that side~~ of the ~~at least one~~ sheet which faces away from said beam, by melting through this sheet in the region of its machining area.

2. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the focus of the laser beam focus is situated at such a distance from the surface of the sheet to be machined that the irradiation area of the laser on the surface exceeds the focal area thereof by at least 50 percent ~~is not focused upon the surface~~.

3. (currently amended) A method for laser machining a coated sheet, comprising:

generating on at least one surface of the coated sheet at least one topographical change protruding from the surface by directing a laser beam onto the sheet and guiding the laser beam to describe a narrowing spiral, whereby the laser beam generates the at least one topographical change protruding from:

(a) the laser beam facing surface of the sheet, or

(b) the surface of the sheet which faces away from said beam, by melting through this sheet in the region of its machining area ~~The method as claimed in claim 1,~~

bringing ~~wherein~~ at least one further sheet ~~is brought~~ into contact with the sheet formed in (a) or (b) ~~at least one coated sheet~~ in such a way that the at least one protruding topographical change causes the formation of at least one gap between the coated sheet and the at least one further sheet ~~at least two sheets~~, and

welding the coated sheet and the at least one further sheet together ~~in that the at least two sheets,~~ in the region of the at least one gap ~~, are welded together~~ in such a way that vaporization products formed in the process ~~can~~ escape into the at least one gap.

4. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the at least two sheets are welded together to form a weld seam, and wherein said ~~in such a way that the resultant~~ weld seam at least partially replaces the at least one topographical change previously generated.

5. (currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein [[,]] the surface from which said least one topographical change protrudes is the laser beam facing surface ~~side facing the laser~~.

6. (currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein the surface from which said least one topographical change protrudes is the surface of the sheet which faces away from the laser beam ~~side facing away from the laser~~.

7. (currently amended) A method for laser machining a coated sheet ~~sheets~~, comprising:

- generating ~~in which,~~ on at least one ~~side of at least one~~ surface of the coated sheet [[,]] at least one topographical change protruding from the sheet ~~surface is generated~~ by ~~means of a laser~~ directing a laser beam onto the sheet ~~surface by means of a scanner device, wherein~~ and guiding the laser beam ~~is guided~~ to describe ~~about the center of its machining area~~ a narrowing spiral, whereby the laser beam generates the at least one topographical change on the surface ~~that side~~ of the ~~at least one~~ sheet which faces away from said beam [[,]] by melting through this sheet in the region of its machining area, and
- controlling ~~wherein~~ said melting through ~~is controlled~~ by pre-specifying the laser processing time or by providing a penetration sensor which regulates the laser ~~machining time~~.

8. (cancelled).

9. (cancelled).